

ANTHROPOGEOGRAPHY

A section of geography investigating relations between the natural environment (geographical, natural and climatic conditions) and human civilization. (gr. *ánthrōpos* – man, *geōgraphía* – description of the earth; hence "anthropogeography" – the geography of man).

Anthropogeography examines the mutual influences of human activity and the natural environment. It provides a geographically argued explanation of the diversity in the development of human communities, the distribution of the population, as well as the diverse forms of economic and social development. There are three main concepts of anthropogeography: 1) geographical determinism that recognises the strong impact of the environment on the community and stresses the adaptation of man to the natural environment (this position is the origin of geopolitics), 2) geographical nihilism that negates the impact of the environment on the development of civilisation, and 3) geographical possibilism that recognises the reciprocity of these relations.

The main issue of anthropogeography - the relationship between society and the geographical environment – has been known since antiquity, but an important development of interest in this issue occurred in the 19th century, mainly owing to the German ethnologist and geographer Friedrich Ratzel, who created the methodological and theoretical foundations of this discipline. Ratzel defined anthropogeography as the science of the natural conditions of societies and the spread of man.

In 1897, Ratzel, who viewed the world of man and nature dynamically and antagonistically, used the idea of social Darwinism to develop the concept of society as a living organism that is born, matures, ages and dies and functions in conjunction with the natural environment. According to Ratzel, man is geographically determined, just like the world of plants or animals, so he should be treated as a biological being. Human communities, living in different types of geographical environment, go through the successive stages of civilisation development in their history, adapting to the changing conditions of the environment and develop various forms of adaptation, manifested in different ways of economic management and cultures. The key role in development was played by migration, the movement of people in order to settle in an environment that guarantees comfortable living conditions. In the further development process, movement is being replaced by a struggle for space and territory.

Ratzel drew attention to the relationship between the economic development of the community and the size of the population and to the fact that the impact of nature on the community (both its physical and spiritual features) is related to the lifestyle and ways of managing the environment. According to Ratzel, law, customs, religious beliefs, language are works of nature, and similarities between different cultures must be the result of old contacts and migration. He pointed to the links between anthropogeography and political geography, arguing that social development depends on geographical conditions and that a society that has adapted to the territory and its conditions to the highest degree, naturally crosses the borders of areas owned by other nations and expands into new territories.

At the beginning of the 20th century, anthropogeography was the leading school in German

economic geography, it influenced the concepts of the French geographer Paul Vidale de la Blache (an advocate of geographical possibilism), the ethnology of the turn of the 19th and 20th century, and provided the foundation of one of the research methods – diffusionism. In the 20th century, Ratzel's anthropogeography had an impact on the American environmental school.

Ratzel's ideas were used by Nazi ideologists as a theoretical justification for Germany's territorial expansion. Rudolf Kjellén's theory of geopolitics, derived from anthropogeography, together with his interpretation of the concept of *Lebensraum*, was taken over, developed and adapted by Third Reich politicians and used, among others, in the theory of racial struggle for living space. Theories of environmental determinism (climatic, physical) met with criticism as providing the foundations for racist ideology.

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